

that in a modified form (temporary, not now life-long)—remained (6<sup>2ff.</sup>). But, though the custom of vowing human beings was no longer possible, the shadow of it remained in the practice of substituting for the person a sum of money determined by the age and sex of the person, 50 shekels being payable for a man and 30 for a woman between the ages of twenty and sixty, when the powers were presumably at their highest, and smaller sums for those under twenty and over sixty (Lv 27<sup>1-7</sup>). These estimates doubtless often represented a substantial demand on the financial resources of the worshipper; the priests would have many motives of both a higher and a lower kind for insisting that he must not escape with an offering which had cost him little or nothing (cf. the noble words of David in 2 S 24<sup>24</sup>). They stood to gain heavily by the practice of vows, as what was vowed to God was as good as made over to them (Lv 27<sup>2</sup>). But the OT shows here its customary regard for the poor by providing that in their case these demands should be relaxed: they are only to pay according to their ability, as estimated by the priest (Lv 27<sup>8</sup>).

Persons devoted by the ban could not be redeemed; they must be put to death (Lv 27<sup>29</sup>). This law had doubtless chiefly in view the destruction of Canaanite idolaters: it could have been enforced, or applicable, only in early times (Jos 6<sup>21</sup>; cf. 1 S 15<sup>3</sup>); for the later age it would suggest little more than the obligation of uncompromising hostility to idolatry.

An examination of the vows recorded and of the laws regulating vows throws some light on the character both of the worshipper and of his God. The vow was born in a sense of need or an experience of distress (Ps 66<sup>14</sup>). The things that men desired were deliverance, prosperity, health, children, victory; and the God to whom the vows were offered was believed to be pleased with sacrifice (even—in the early period—with human sacrifice). The circle of ideas with which vows were associated is priestly rather than prophetic, and there is an externalism and a quasi-commercial conception of the relation between God and man which is alien to the higher prophetic spirit. But, though vows in the later period were sometimes lightly made and dexterously evaded, the manifest emotion with which many a singer in the Psalter records his gratitude to God as he pays his vows shows that they must often have represented a warm and genuine religious experience. They are an implicit confession of the speaker's recognized insufficiency, and their fulfilment is the expression of his gratitude for the experienced help of Jahweh (cf. Jer 33<sup>11</sup>). It is no accident, however, that vows play practically no rôle at all in the NT, where the demand is for a consecration not occasional but continuous, and for a consecration not of gifts but of the entire personality.

LITERATURE.—Artt. on 'Vows' in *HDB*, *EBI*, and *PRE<sup>3</sup>*; W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites<sup>2</sup>*, London, 1894, p. 381 ff.; B. Stade, *Bibl. Theologie des AT<sup>2</sup>* (ed. A. Bertholet), Tübingen, 1911, pp. 60 f., 69 ff.

JOHN E. McFADYEN.

**VOWS (Hindu).**—Vows are a highly important element in the Hindu religion. Thus, according to a Sanskrit lawbook, a Brahman ascetic must keep the five vows (*vrata*) of abstention from injuring living beings, of truthfulness, of abstention from theft, of continence, and of liberality, besides five minor vows, such as abstention from anger, purity, etc. (Baudhāyana, ii. 18. 1, 3). Brāhmanical students were subject to restrictive rules of the same kind during their residence with a teacher, and they had to undertake, moreover, special vows when learning particular portions of the Veda, such as the *Sāvitrīvrata*, in connexion with the study of the sacred prayer called *Sāvitrī*. The five great *vratas* of the Jainas, 'I renounce all killing of living beings, lying, stealing, sexual pleasures, all

attachments whether great or small,' are evidently formed upon the Brāhmanical model. Nor are the five commandments (*pañcasīla*) of the Buddhist canonical books essentially different from the five Brāhman vows, especially as they are supplemented like the latter by five other vows which are binding on the Buddhist monk only. On his entrance into the Order, the would-be Buddhist had to raise his joined hands and to declare: 'I take refuge in the Buddha, in the Law, in the Congregation.' Many different Brāhmanical *vratas*, in the sense of self-imposed devout or ceremonial observances of any sort, are described in the Purānas, and have passed from them into the mediæval and modern Sanskrit Digests of Religious Usages, such as Hemādri's *Āturvargacintāmaṇi* (written c. 1300 A.D., printed in the *Bibliotheca Indica*), which devotes more than 2300 pages to the subject of *vratas*, most of them to be performed and repeated on certain stated days of the year. Thus the *puṣpadvītyāvrataṃ* (i. 382), to be performed on the second (*dvītyā*) of the bright half of every month for a whole year, beginning with the month of Kārttika, consists of eating nothing but flowers or blossoms (*puṣpa*) during all those days, and presenting the Brāhman at the close of the *vrata* with flowers made of gold and with a cow. As a recompense for performing this *vrata* a man obtains heavenly enjoyments and a metallic car. For seven consecutive re-births he will be imbued with a knowledge of the Vedas and of the Vedaṅgas, and will live in happiness for a long time, surrounded by his sons and grandsons. In the case of the 'bull-vow' (*vr̥ṣabhavratam*), which is undertaken on the eighth of the bright half, one bestows a bull clad in a white robe and decked with ornaments, the spiritual reward consisting in a long residence in the heaven of Siva, followed by re-birth in the station of a king. One performing the 'river-vow' (*nadīvrataṃ*) should, within certain intervals, worship seven different sacred streams, each for one day, offering milk in water, giving water-pots filled with milk to the Brāhman, subsisting on nothing but milk himself, bathing far from the village, and taking food at night only. At the end of the year he should give a *pala* of silver to the Brāhman. By so doing he will enjoy a long and prosperous life, and will in a future birth be free from disease, eminent, virtuous, and rich, enjoying the position of a king, or of a distinguished Brāhman (ii. 462). By the side of these comparatively simple rites, we find others with a more complicated ceremonial; but the ingredients of fasting, gifts to Brāhman, offerings to deities, etc., recur in nearly all these endless *vratas*, which give a nice round of religious observances, entailing spiritual blessings and natural comforts for the whole of the Hindu year. The *Vratarāja*, which is considered the leading Sanskrit treatise on *vratas* in W. India at the present day, contains a description of no fewer than 205 *vratas*. The performance of *vratas* is nowadays specially common among women, and this may be an ancient custom, considering that in Kālidāsa's drama *Urvaśi*, the queen, when desirous of effecting a reconciliation with her husband, sends for the king, inviting him to undertake a certain *vrata* in common with her; and that the Sanskrit lawbooks exhort wives to perform their *vratas* together with their husbands. Speaking of modern *vratas*, R. C. Bose observes: 'When the boy is sent to the *Pātsālā* (school), the girl at the age of five has to begin her course of *vratas*.' The first *vrata* is the river Pūjā, instituted after the example of the goddess Durgā, who performed this ceremonial that she might obtain a good husband, Siva being considered a model husband. On the last day of

the Bengali year, two little earthen images of the goddess Durgā are made by the girl and worshipped by her. The next two *vratas* are those of Hari or Kṛṣṇa, and of the ten images. Then comes the *Sajātī vrata*, in performing which the girl repeats a volley of abuses against her *satin*, or rival wife in the possible future, in order to avert the dreaded evils of polygamy. Of *vratas* to be practised by a married woman, the *Sāvitrīvrata* is made specially prominent by Bose. This *vrata* derives its name from the ancient legend of the faithful Sāvitrī, who through her devotion revived her deceased husband. It is annually celebrated in the Bengali month of Jyaiṣṭha both by women whose husbands are alive and by widows who are desirous of averting the evils of widowhood in a future birth. In the former case the husband is worshipped by his wife with sandal and flowers, and she cooks a good dinner for him. The prayers are read by the priest, who gets his usual fee and all the offerings. This *vrata* should be performed regularly for fourteen years, at the end of which the expense is tenfold more, in clothes, bedding, brass utensils, and an entertainment to Brāhmins and friends, than in the previous years. The *Sāvitrīvrata* has also been described by Ward, who mentions, besides, the *Adūrasinhāsana vrata*, at which 30 different wives of Brāhmins are entertained, one on each day, during the month of Vaiśākha; and the *Pañcamīvrata*, a *vrata* on a large scale extending over a period of six years, and including many partial or total fasts, and various gifts to Brāhmins on the part of the woman who is to perform this *vrata*, and various acts of worship on the part of the officiating Brāhmins, the whole ceremony closing with a grand dinner to Brāhmins and others. Ward calls the *vratas* a very lucrative source of profit to the Brāhmins. He defines them as unconditioned vows to perform religious ceremonies, distinguishing them from conditional vows consisting of a promise to present offerings on condition that the god bestow such or such a benefit. Vows of this kind are, e.g., when a man promises to sacrifice a goat, or to present two loads of sweetmeats, or cloth, ornaments, money, a house, etc., if the god grant his request to have sickness removed, or to become the servant of some European, or for riches, a house, a wife, and son. Bose observes that vows made in times of sickness are fulfilled.

LITERATURE.—*The Laws of Manu*, tr. by G. Bühler, *SBE*, vol. xxv., Oxford, 1886; M. Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, London, 1893; H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, Strassburg, 1896; T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*; Mandlik, *Hindu Law*, Bombay, 1880; W. Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos*, 2 vols., London, 1817; R. C. Bose, *The Hindoos as they are*, Calcutta, 1881.

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**VOWS (Jewish).**—As the OT amply indicates, vows were a familiar feature in the religious life of Israel in former days (see art. VOWS [Hebrew]).

In the Apocrypha the references to the subject are few.

'Let nothing hinder thee,' says Ben Sira, 'to pay thy vow in due time; and wait not until death to be justified [i.e. 'to pay thy debt']. Before thou makest a vow, prepare thyself, and be not as a man that tempteth the Lord.'<sup>1</sup>

Philo<sup>2</sup> has some interesting observations on vows.

The word of the good man, he says, should be his oath, firm and unchangeable, founded steadfastly on truth. Therefore vows and oaths should be superfluous.<sup>3</sup> If a man swear at all, he should swear not by the Divine Name, but by the sacred name of his parents or by some of the great objects of nature, which are ancient and, in accordance with the will of their Creator, never grow old.<sup>4</sup> Once made, a vow should be sacred, particularly if it were made 'with sober reason and deliberate purpose.' (Philo would thus seem to open the door

to an annulment of vows made rashly and without due consideration of what they involved.) Some men, Philo continues, make vows 'out of wicked hatred of their species, swearing, for example, that they will not admit this or that man to sit at the same table with them, or to come under the same roof.'<sup>1</sup> And he adds impressively: 'Sometimes, even after the death of their enemy, they keep up their enmity. I would recommend such men to seek to propitiate the mercy of God that so they may find some cure for the diseases of their souls.' He then proceeds to explain the Mosaic laws concerning vows in his characteristic allegorical fashion.

All the invective of the religious teachers failed to kill the practice of vow-making. The Talmudic Rabbis were forced, accordingly, to legislate for the popular inclination to it in their turn, and, since that inclination survived long after the Talmudic age, the codifiers had to adapt the Talmudic enactments to the needs of their day, and even to amplify them. Two whole tractates of the Talmud—*Nedarim* ('The Laws on Vows') and *Nazir* ('The Laws on the Nazirite')—are devoted to this subject. The laws on vows are embodied in Joseph Qaro's *Shūlhān 'Arūkh* (16th cent.), the latest of the great codes, and a separate section, consisting of 33 chapters, each containing many paragraphs, is devoted to them. To give even a summary of this extensive and intricate legislation is obviously impossible here. Its magnitude and complexity are themselves an indication of the large place which vows occupied in Jewish life in former times, and of the importance attached to the subject by the Rabbinical mind. The contents of the first chapter of the treatise on vows in the *Shūlhān 'Arūkh* are, however, interesting as an illustration of the spirit in which the Talmudic and the later teachers approached the subject. The title of the chapter is: 'Which Vows are Praiseworthy and which Improper?' For, besides a desire to preserve the inviolability of the vow, the great anxiety of the Talmudic doctors and of their successors was the prevention of useless vows which failed to minister either to religion or to morality. Among such vows were those made hurriedly or frivolously. There were also vows imposing upon the persons taking them a needless austerity and self-mortification.

Thus, when a beautiful youth under a vow of Naziriteship presents himself to Simon the Just (3rd cent. B.C.), the sage asks him reprovingly, 'How couldst thou have consented to destroy thy fair locks?'<sup>2</sup>

The chapter in Qaro's work to which reference has just been made<sup>3</sup> opens with the following monition, borrowed, like most of the prescriptions of the codes, from the Talmud:

'Be not habituated to make vows;<sup>4</sup> he that makes a vow is called wicked.<sup>5</sup> This of ordinary vows; but, as to vows made for holy ends, it is a positive duty to fulfil them. Even vows for charitable purposes are not desirable; if one have the money, let him give it straightway without a vow, and if not, let him defer his vow until he have it [which obviously means that, in either case, a vow is undesirable]. It is "permissible" to make a vow in time of trouble. He that saith "I will study this or that chapter of the Torah, and, fearing lest he may be slothful, binds himself to study it by a vow, his vow is permissible, as is that of one who, fearing for his strength of purpose, fortifies by a vow his determination to fulfil a certain precept of the Law."<sup>6</sup> He that takes a vow in order to strengthen his good resolves, and to improve his way of life, is a man of energy, and worthy of praise. For example, if he be a glutton, and abstains by vow from meat for one year or two, or if he be a drunkard and denies himself wine for a time or for life, or if, proud of his comeliness, he becomes a Nazirite [as a penance]—all such acts are a service of God, and to them the Talmudic Sages refer when they say that "Vows are a protecting hedge to renunciation."<sup>7</sup> And the concluding utterance is instructive: "But, in spite of their being a service of God, it is well that a man should not make many vows of self-denial; rather let him abstain without a vow."

The saying is typical of the Jewish spirit, which looks askance at vows, often made to be broken, and at asceticism, which makes for inefficiency in the great work of life. For, according to the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the interesting parallels, or contrasts, in *Mishnāh Nedarim*, iii. 3, xi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Nedarim*, 9b.

<sup>3</sup> *Yorē De'ah*, 203

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Nedarim*, 20a.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ib.* 22a.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ib.* 5b.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Maimonides, *Hilc. Nedarim*, end; *Abōth*, iii. 13.

<sup>1</sup> Sir 18<sup>22</sup>; cf. Epistle of Jeremiah, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Bohn, iii. 255 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The Essenes gave practical effect to this opinion. See Jos. *B. J.* ii. viii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Mt 5<sup>34</sup>ff.